

# Abu Dhabi Captures Leading Destination Title from Dubai



World Travel Awards Unveils Who Are the Best of the Best

Abu Dhabi has walked off with the coveted title of Middle East's Leading Destination in a shock announcement at this year's prestigious World Travel Awards on Monday 3 May at the luxurious The Address Dubai Marina.

The news means that Abu Dhabi is the first destination to seize the region's most sought after title from Dubai. Abu Dhabi Tourism Authority also scored as the region's Leading Tourist Board. Etihad Airways saw a night of honours too, taking home a series of major awards including 'Middle East's Leading Airline', 'Middle East's Leading Airline Economy Class', 'Middle East's Leading Airline First Class', 'Middle East's Leading Airline Inflight Entertainment', 'Middle East's Leading Cabin Staff' and 'Middle East's Leading International Marketing Campaign'

Dubai's Burj Al Arab was also successful, presented with the 'Middle East's Leading Hotel' award.

Guest of Honour at the region's most important night of the year was HH Prince Bandar Bin Saud Bin Khalid, who was presented with the 'Middle East's Leading Personality of the Year' award.

He was joined by more than 400 senior industry figures in the travel industry, including His Excellency Sheikh Faisal Khalid Sultan Al Qassemi, Her Excellency Dr. Rajiha Bint Abdul Ameer Bin Ali, Minister of Tourism of Sultanate of Oman, His Excellency Jamal Al Hai, Senior Vice President of Dubai Airport, Bernhard Bohnenberger, Chairman & Managing Director of Six Senses Resorts & Spas, John Bullough, CEO of Aldar Properties, Ali H. Lakhrain, President & CEO of Millennium Hotels & Resorts, Ahmed Al Mammari, Vice President of Royal Jet Group and Peter Baumgartner, Chief Commercial Officer of Etihad Airways.

Rotana Hotels & Resorts, Emaar and Safar Travel & Tourism triumphed at the ceremony. Rotana, in particular, made a strong show of force, winning an impressive total of nine awards, including the highly sought-after 'Middle East's Leading Hotel Brand'.

Emaar took the coveted title of 'Middle East's Leading Tourism Property Development Company'; Safar Travel & Tourism was awarded with 'Middle East's Leading Business Travel Agency' and 'Abu Dhabi's Leading Travel Agency', both for the second consecutive year.

Atlantis The Palm, Dubai and Qatar Airways won awards for 'Middle East's Leading Resort' and 'Middle East's Leading Airline Business Class' respectively.

The Yas Hotel, Abu Dhabi was voted unanimously as 'Middle East's Leading New Hotel'. Another unanimous vote was for 'Middle East's Responsible Tourism Award', which went to Al Maha Desert Resort & Spa, Dubai

In addition to the overall Middle East winners, there were award categories too for Bahrain, Iraq,

Jordan, Kuwait, Lebanon, Makkah, Oman, Qatar, Saudi Arabia, Syria, UAE, Yemen, Abu Dhabi, Dubai, Fujairah, Ra al-Khaimah and Sharjah.

Key winners in the regions included AKMC-Al Shohada Hotel, awarded 'Makkah's Leading Hotel', Six Senses Zighy Bay, named 'Oman's Leading Resort' and Regency Travel & Tours, first in the new category of 'Qatar's Leading Travel Agency'.

The World Travel Awards, now in its 17th year and the global travel and tourism industry equivalent of the 'Oscars', is helping to drive up standards of customer service and business excellence throughout the world.

"The Middle East is a shining example to the international industry, even in the challenging times that this region and destinations worldwide have been experiencing in the past two years", said Graham E. Cooke, Founder and President of World Travel Awards.

"World Travel Awards believes that one of the key priorities in travel and tourism is making sure that companies and organisations have the right type of skills and training to underpin the industry and help create new jobs and prosperity for the region. As the Middle East industry becomes more sophisticated, these jobs are inevitably becoming complex and high value" he said. "Skilled people are the lynchpin of the Middle East's future growth potential.

"No travel and tourism company cannot hope to be successful in these awards unless they offer unparalleled customer service", continued Cooke." The key objective, however, is alleviating inconsistencies of delivery.

"Too often customer service quality can fluctuate and create real challenges in maintaining a reputation for excellence - but this is clearly not the case for our winners! Without exception, they have reliably demonstrated outstanding service.

"I want to congratulate them all. Their contribution to global tourism is truly remarkable. They should be justly proud of their achievements."

The overall winners will now compete against the *crème de la crème* throughout the world at World Travel Awards Grand Final which will take place in London (UK) in November, immediately before World Travel Market.

### **About World Travel Awards**

The World Travel Awards was launched in 1993 to acknowledge and recognise excellence in the world's travel and tourism industry.

Now celebrating its 17th Anniversary, the awards is regarded as the very highest achievement that a travel product could ever hope to receive.

Votes are cast by 183,000 travel professionals which include travel agencies, tour and transport companies and tourism organizations in over 160 countries across the globe.

Votes are cast globally by fellow industry professionals in over 1, 000 different categories.

Attended by senior executives from major travel companies, operators and destinations, WTA events are universally respected as providing established, top level networking opportunities, regionally and globally.

The World Travel Award's official list of worldwide media partners includes: BBC World News, eTurboNews, Breaking Travel News, CNBC Arabiya, Khaleej Times, Trav Talk, Trade Arabia, TTN, Travel Daily News International, Focus on Travel News, New Focus Travel Magazine, Tourism Review, JAX FAX, Travel & Leisure, Travel & Leisure Golf, Xenios & Xenios World

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**About The Address Hotels + Resorts:**

The Address Hotels + Resorts, the five star premium hotel brand launched by Emaar Hospitality Group sets an all-new definition for global standards of luxury. Creating a distinct positioning with the brand philosophy of 'Where Life Happens', The Address properties are situated in the most vibrant locations and target corporate, leisure and group travellers - particularly the international jetsetters and global high achievers who value personalised luxury. This modern brand focuses on a 'one size fits one' strategy where benefits to guests and service excellence are a priority. The expansion of The Address Hotels + Resorts include key destinations in the Middle East and North Africa region, the Indian Subcontinent, Asia, Europe and America over the next ten years.

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